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First Strike in War Called Vital to U. S.

NEW YORK, May 23 (AP) — A member of the board which made the Galtner report on United States defenses says he believes "if we have strategic intelligence that the Russians are planning a strike against us that we certainly should make the first strike."

Robert Sprague, chairman of

the board of Sprague Electric Co., made the statement in a taped television discussion, now being aired over the Nation's educational television status. The program was taped by the National Broadcasting Co. on May 10, six days before failure of the summit conference with its repercussions of the U-2 plane incident.

Moral Point Noted

Mr. Sprague said the decision to "make the first strike" would be "a very difficult decision for the men involved to have to make."

It would have to be based on an assumption, he said, that "it was definite there was going to be a nuclear onslaught."

Mr. Sprague said the United States now has a greater relative lead in superiority over Russia than it has ever had, but will not have again. He added that the United States also has moral restraints that Russia may not have.

"Because I think it is a national policy we will not strike the first blow," he said. "Now

with the enormous power of nuclear weapons and ability to deliver them over long distances, if we strike the first strike this would wipe out a very large percentage of our military capability, and in this situation we do not have the superior power position."

Galtner Report Still Secret

"If war appears to be imminent and Russia, for example, for her own reasons isn't making the progress of peaceful means that she wants to make, and decides on military means, in that event it is absolutely essential we strike first if we possibly can."

Mr. Sprague made his statements on a television program titled "Briefing Session." Participants with him discussing "United States Complacency vs. Soviet Power" were Dr. Jerome Wiesner, director of electronic research, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and J. Sterling Livingston, professor of business administration, Harvard University.

Mr. Sprague was a member of the board named for H. Rowan Galtner, which made a report to President Eisenhower in 1957. Never officially made public, the report was quoted in some newspapers as painting a picture of grave danger from Soviet military might.